

LIFE IN A STATE PRISON.

A GRIND OF TOIL THAT GOES ON CEASELESSLY.

Interesting Facts About Convict Life in the Joliet Penitentiary—Prisoners Come from All Stations of Life, Though the Professional Rogue Is Largely in the Majority—Prison Rules and Regulations—Christmas and Thanksgiving in the Pen—Convicts at the Play—Sunday Chapel Service.

I'm writing on this subject I wish to give you readers a somewhat brief view of convict life in the Joliet penitentiary. Being in a position where I come in daily contact with the prisoners, I have an opportunity of studying the nature of the bird and learning many of the characteristics a convict's life is subjected to.

If life is not worth living to the man who has liberty and a clear conscience, as some contend, what must be the verdict on this subject of one who is deprived of that which contains the greatest sweets of the earthly existence? Trials and tribulations may come to harass the life of the free citizen which make his existence miserable, and which will sometimes make him long for the inevitable period that relieves him of his

afflictions and transfers him to the undisclosed country. Yet how enviable in his position, he is rich or poor, elevated or lowly, to the majority of convicts one sees at this penal servitude. To be barred from all the world, to see no familiar face from year to year, to receive no word of sympathy, no

word of kindness, with a number of hours allotted for work but none for recreation and plenty of time to chew the cud of remorse; this is indeed a living death. There is nothing inside the grim gray walls that excites any other feeling than pity for the army of poor devils who, for offenses against society, are forced to engage in a grind of toil that goes on ceaselessly. The surroundings are cheerless enough, to some almost repulsive, and to one who is accustomed to the fullest liberty in speech and action they are difficult to understand.

A beginner first passes through the ordeal of the solitary and is instructed in the rules and regulations; his hair is cut short, his face shaved smooth, a bath taken and he is also vaccinated. After a full description of him is noted down, his weight, height, color of hair and eyes, chest, head and finger measure, etc., he is assigned to some kind of work, usually a trade. If he has one, which is not often the case, and then the grind begins. Every day is the same, there is no change to relieve the monotony of the convict's existence. It is the same with one as with the other. They are called at six in the morning by the ringing of a bell at which all must rise and prepare for breakfast. At seven they are marched to their various work shops where "chill is played" until twelve; one hour is allowed for dinner, which is eaten in the cells, and at six o'clock they retire again for the night, with the exception of in the winter, when quitting time is regulated by the length of the days, as it is necessary to have all the convicts secure in their cells before dark. At nine o'clock all must put out their lights and retire. No boisterous

language or conversation with a prisoner in an adjoining cell is permitted. At present there are about 1,400 convicts confined in the Joliet prison, among whom only about fifteen are women; the number of

the latter generally averages from a dozen to eighteen, which is rather a small percentage compared with the number of male convicts.

The number of these "unfortunates" is at the present about as low as it has been in several years, and only has the capacity of the institution been taxed, and that was twelve or fifteen years ago, when some 1,800 prisoners found time to put a little blank space in their memory. The number of arrivals averages from forty to fifty a month, and naturally the releases about the same.

The discipline is humane but very severe, which of course is quite necessary and the slightest disobedience is punishable by solitary confinement, where the convict sees no one, is obliged to live on dry bread and water, which is handed him but twice a day, and his cell is the stone floor. After returning from a siege of ten days or so in the solitary the prisoner would make a very good substitute for a corpse. No matter how refractory he may have been, he is always sure to be very weak and submissive when he returns. But most of the prisoners are very obedient, and strive in many ways to gain favor with the officers in charge by their good conduct, which is in truth the best method to follow, not alone for his welfare as a prisoner, but such a course is also necessary in order to be allowed the good time which shortens his sentence nearly half. This good time confers with one month of rest for the first year, two months for the second, three months for the third, and so on until the sixth year, when six months are taken off of every year thereafter.

According to this, a prisoner sentenced to

a twenty-year term actually serves only eleven years and three months, and a ten-year sentence would be shortened to five years and three months. Thus it will be seen that good behavior offers a large inducement. A convict, though, may lose all or a portion of his good time if he proves troublesome to the extent of four punishments.

If one could learn the history of each convict's private life before entering the inside of these prison walls he would discover that people from all stations in life are here brought together and placed on an equality with each other and are treated as such. If investigation could be made one would find here the preacher, lawyer, doctor, men of education and refinement, clerks, college graduates, and in fact men from all positions in life from the influential politician to the professional burglar or common thief. But even to the most scrutinizing eye, all look alike in their habiliments of striped clothing and no one outside of their keepers could distinguish the red-handed murderer from the once influential and respected citizen whose hand is placed on his shoulder as they march along in the lock step.

I do not wish the reader to infer that those who were once shining lights in society are here in large numbers. They form but a small part of the entire lot of prisoners, but they are here nevertheless. The professional law-breaker is largely in the majority, and as a rule gives the most trouble. As a general thing he is very ignorant, with a number of hours allotted for work but none for recreation and plenty of time to chew the cud of remorse; this is indeed a living death. There is nothing inside the grim gray walls that excites any other feeling than pity for the army of poor devils who, for offenses against society, are forced to engage in a grind of toil that goes on ceaselessly. The surroundings are cheerless enough, to some almost repulsive, and to one who is accustomed to the fullest liberty in speech and action they are difficult to understand.

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cranberry sauce, celery, mashed potatoes, etc. It also includes the usual number of apples and cigars.

Christmas has a treat in store for them in the way of a theatrical performance which takes place in the chapel in the forenoon. Usually some comedy company is engaged for their amusement on this day, and a good hearty laugh is enjoyed, and to say that the convicts appreciate this entertainment expresses it but mildly. An unusually good dinner is also served on this day, as also on New Year's, which is the extent of their merry-making for the year.

Chapel services are held every Sunday at ten o'clock. Every convict is at liberty to go if he chooses, or remain in his cell. Catholic services are held once a month. A regular chaplain is engaged to conduct the services, and a choir and orchestra of convicts furnish the music, which is very good, indeed, to say the least.

The prisoners are allowed any of the weekly papers, but no dailies. The papers, as also all the letters received or sent, first pass through the hands of the censor, who clips from them anything which he thinks ought not to be communicated to the prisoners. They are allowed to write once in four weeks, and only one letter at a time. Friends may be seen only once in eight weeks.

Each convict is numbered is well understood. When the number reaches 10,000 the numbering commences over again; this took place about the first of January last, and will probably not occur again for twenty-five years.

The convicts are shaved once a week and are treated to a hair cut every two months. Neither is a very pleasant sensation. For a shave each man lathers himself, rubs it in, flops down in the chair, and in a minute and a half is shaved clean. This always takes place in the work-shop. The hair-cut usually occurs as if it were accomplished in the dark with a pair of sheep shears or a saw. A bath is taken once a week in summer and once every two weeks in winter.

Convicts have, before their first week of imprisonment ends, figured out to the hour when they will be released, and have, perhaps, long before that time arrived, planned more than one course they will pursue when they are permitted to pass through the penitentiary any day but holidays and Sundays. The hours for going through are at 9:00 and 11:00 a. m. and 2:00 and 4:00 p. m. Twenty-five cents is charged for admittance.

The release is always made in the evening of the day before their time expires, when the convict is given a good fair suit of clothes, \$10 in money and a railway ticket to the place from whence he came. The clothing with which he arrived has all been turned in to the laundry, and the engine house. In fact nothing is saved of what the prisoner brings to the prison but his watch and jewelry and what money he may have. This he may spend for papers only.

THE CALAMITY IDEA.

NOT SO PREVALENT AS CROAKERS WOULD HAVE US THINK.

The Press of Iowa on the Agricultural Situation—The Farmers Seem to Be Getting Along Nicely, and Will Keep Out of the Poor House for a While Longer.

ARE FARMERS IMPROVED? We copy below the answers of a number of Iowa papers to the above question and similar testimony could doubtless be drawn from the press of other Western States. It will be seen that the "calamity" idea of the present agricultural situation is not so prevalent as certain croakers would make us believe.

Waterloo Reporter: Within a few doors of each other on a certain block in this city live five farmers who have each earned a competence of this world's goods and retired from the farm to spend the rest of their days in taking the comforts born of the fruits of their labor. On a corner in a neighboring block another farmer has purchased a nice lot and will shortly build a modern residence and also retire. This condition can not be equaled by any other branch of business, and seems to be a pretty good answer to the croakers who have been bewailing the impoverished condition of the Western farmer. Farming, when rightly done, seems to pay pretty well in these parts.

Indianola Herald: There is much said these days concerning the farmer. He is termed "the poor farmer," "the down-trodden farmer," and various other names, all of which are certainly very disagreeable to the average intelligent free American-born farmer citizen. The Herald is not acquainted with the condition of farmers in other parts of the State. They may be a lot of ignorant, down-trodden slaves, but we want to resent with great vigor the idea that any such condition of affairs exists among the farmers of Warren County. On the contrary, they as a class are the wealthiest, most independent of all others. They run the politics of the county, hold the offices, represent the county in the Legislature, levy the taxes, and assess the property. The two banks in Indianola are owned, controlled, and managed by farmers. They are about the only set of gentlemen who, when they die and the debts are paid, have something to divide among their children. The judges and clerks of court know this to be true. The farmers of Warren County have to do about \$50,000, which is there for safe keeping. They do not get interest on it. Some of the farmers are scarce of money, and many of them are mortgaged, but as a class they have plenty. The farmers of Warren County disdain to be called down-trodden. They are free men, and not slaves to any man or set of men. The Herald is of the opinion that the farmers of all Iowa are as independent and free as those of the county.

Grundy Center Republican: There are a large number of farmers in this county who have retired from active business and are taking life easy. Many of them have moved to town, either bought or built nice residences, and are educating their children. In order to knock demagogism over the oppressed farmer in the head, it is only necessary to take a ride into the country and one can notice prosperity on every hand among the farmers. Not ten days ago the writer was out in the west part of Palmer Township, and the only rickety houses and barns observable belonged to Iowa's Governor, Mr. Boies. The Governor is not a poor man by any means, and we suppose that if Gen. Weaver or some of his ilk were riding over this county with a stranger, those houses and barns would be pointed out to show how oppressed the poor farmer is, when, in fact, they belong to a gentleman who is plenty able to put up neat cottages and barns for all his renters. With the Democracy it is anything to catch votes, no matter how they are secured.

Cedar Rapids Times: While we cannot say the city is full of retired farmers, men who live at their ease in a modest and sensible way, we can say there is a large number of them, more than any other class of men in the city who have partially or entirely retired from the active battles of life. And we may add that not all the independent well-to-do farmers, farmers who do not owe a dollar and who have money at interest, who have good houses and barns, cattle and horses, and good comfortable carriages for their families, are in the city. There are scores of them on their farms within but a short distance of the city, sitting under their own vines and fig trees, spending the evening of their day in peace and plenty. There have been more farmers, two to one, who commenced with but little or nothing since we came to Cedar Rapids and who have secured a competency than any other class of men in the city, or out of it.

Atlantic Messenger: While the demagogues are waiting over the oppressed condition of the farmer the farmer himself is building new residences, new barns, buying more stock, and paying by a balance in the bank. The best carriages seen on the streets of Atlanta are driven by farmers who a few years ago had nothing. Take it year in and year out there is no business man who does better on his investments, is so independent and enjoys life more than the farmer who really farms. If any one doubts that the good farmer has been prosperous let him count up the number in every Iowa county seat who have moved into town for the purpose of schooling their children and taking life easy. Atlantic is full of them, and so are the others.

a police justice that no distinguished man—at least no distinguished man over his own name—had ever hinted at it? If it be a good rejoinder to this to say that the evil had only existed during the last two years, why is it not equally so to the declaration that Rule XV. cannot be sustained because it has just been invented? If novelty be no objection to the one, why is it to the other? The most surprising sentence in the whole article is the last one, "May we not believe that he (Speaker Reed) is brave enough and wise enough and strong enough to retrace his steps and correct his error?" What little comprehension this writer would have us think he possesses of what has actually occurred.

The "error" whereof he treats was the error of the Speaker just twenty-six hours. Then it became the error of the House of Representatives. It has since become the error of the Republican party and of the people of the United States. It has previously been the error of the State supreme courts.

Whatever may be the strength, wisdom, or bravery of the Speaker, he has never thought himself strong enough, wise enough, or brave enough to correct an error of that kind and of those dimensions.

ON PROTECTION, WAGES AND PRICES.

(Senator Justin S. Morrill, in the North American Review.)

Free trade does not even profess regard for the wages of artisans, and is based wholly on the idea of supplying the demand of the consumer at the lowest cost. How the armies which delve in mines and work in mills and factories are fed and housed, educated and paid, does not concern the "dismal science" of free traders—if only they can be cheaply paid. They start in the race by challenging the competition of the lowest-paid laborers of all the world. That wages under free trade, in such a race, can be equal to wages under protection is glaringly preposterous. One fresh illustration of the difference, however, will not be inopportune. The late great wage-strike of the London dockmen was made to obtain an increase of one penny per hour—6d. (12 cents) instead of 5d. (10 cents) per hour—and the increase of one penny per hour has been reckoned as a crowning victory. But the longshoremen, employed in the same kind of work on the docks of New York, are paid 30 cents an hour for day and 40 cents an hour for night work. Two cents an hour was stoutly resisted in free trade London, while 150 per cent. higher wages still prevail under protection in New York.

Protectionists claim, as Bismarck claims, that protection puts the chief burden upon the foreigner, who is compelled to pay the duty or give an equivalent by reducing the price of his products. They also claim that, in the long run, the consumers supply their wants at less cost than would be possible without protected home competition. For example, years ago moquette carpets brought \$5 to \$6 per yard, but under protection, and owing to a loom invented by an American, they are now sold at \$1.50 per yard, and sometimes for less. Bessemer steel rails in 1867 brought \$106 per ton, but with a protective duty the price in 1885 was only \$24.50 per ton, and \$23.83 in 1888. When the American demand in 1872 exceeded the home supply the British price at once was advanced from 230 shillings per ton to 350 shillings, and again in 1880 the British price was for the same reason advanced from 170 shillings per ton to 200. This shows how merciless would be the greed of foreigners were our manufactures suspended for lack of protection.

Home manufactures planted in every State alongside of the farmer largely save in distribution the heavy cost and waste of long transportation. The immediate proximity to farmers of manufactures is an advantage so great that the holdings of farmers in every locality of America where such proximity exists can readily be sold for more than fifty per cent. above the price of land where manufactures have not been established, and annually yield a much larger income.

Iowa and the Whisky Power.

We may as well calculate the power of resurrected whisky this fall. The power has temporarily gained a new lease of life. Like the dead in the valley, they have come together until there is a very great army. The original package saloons are running in almost every town in Iowa, and making money fast, that they will divide with the political party that stands with them. We will waste no time in guessing what party will get the benefit of that power. It requires not the aid of inspiration to tell beforehand, now. The Democrats in every county count on it; and for every package sold to minor, drunkard or tippler the Democrats will get a royalty to help the party, and to continue the saloon in some of its forms and features. This is a strong power. The package saloon is the recruiting place of the Democratic party. Plans will be laid there, inspirations will be gained there. The future weal or woe of the families of Iowa will be greatly influenced by these places. There are good influences enough in the State to meet and defeat these saloons at the polls, but it will not be done by the third parties, nor by indifference, nor by sulking, nor by secretizing, nor by staying from the polls. Earnest work, school district work, must be done. It is interesting to study the affiliations of this saloon power. Wherever Democratic majorities are heaviest, there the liquor power operates. In the towns and cities among ignorance and vice the whisky power finds feeling. The godlike influences of the State must awake and come to the rescue. The country home is all right. All the votes must be polled. The villages are all right. They generally turn out. The cities are not all Democratic. They must be thoroughly awakened, else whisky takes control of Iowa. These nests of every unclean and baleful kind must be scattered and will be, but they are actively making Democrats at present. Iowa takes a drink. The State has a dram in its head. The better judgment must be appealed to.—Iowa State Register.

A GENTLEMAN in Columbus, Ga., has a razor which has been in constant use 104 years. It bears a close resemblance to a broad ax, but does good service yet, and may cut many a whisker before it is finally laid away among the relics of by-gone days.

WITHIN the last three years fifty firms which were engaged in manufacturing and selling roller skates have gone out of the business. This ought to decrease the number of divorce suits, but it doesn't seem to do so.

PITH AND POINT.

IMPORTANT TO WOMEN—MEN.

A GREAT contractor—the girl who laces tightly. WHEN the milkmaid is awkward and dretful the cow generally turns tail. "Ans, Alphonse, do you think you can love me a little when I am old?" "Yes, very."

"Some people want the earth," remarked Atlas, "and I wish they had it; I'm tired of it."

OF course: "What kind of a dinner does Fritz give you for twenty-five cents?" "Oh, a twenty-five cent dinner."

FIRST Tramp—There is no salvation for us now, Bill, but work or death. SECOND Tramp—Is that so? Say, Luke, what's the easiest way to die?

DOCTOR—What is your husband's complaint, ma'am? Is it chronic? Wife—Yes, sir, I have never known him to be satisfied with a meal for the last thirty-five years.

ROBINSON—They say that hiccupping caused by drinking can be stopped by putting a lump of ice in each ear. Wentman—But, then, how do you stop the earache? Robinson—Take another drink.

NEW neighbor (in Chicago)—Good morning, my little dear. I saw you out walking with a very fine-looking gentleman last evening. Is he your papa? Little Girl—Yes, sir, he's one of the nicest papas I ever had.

MR. Wiggs (admiringly)—Mrs. Hanson looks as pretty as a picture this afternoon. Mrs. Wiggs—That costume is very becoming. She has a husband who likes to see a woman decently dressed and isn't too mean to pay for it.

NELLIE—Uncle Jack, who was that lady all in black with the queer white hat when we saw go past just now? Uncle Jack—That was a Sister of Charity, dear. Nelly (after a pause)—Uncle Jack, was it "Hope" or "Faith"?

HUSBAND (angrily)—This beef is all burned up. Why in thunder did you cook it so much? Wife—Well, I cannot think of everything. I was busy writing an article for the Ladies' Cooking Journal, and forgot the meat was in the oven.

"WHAT is the chief end of man?" asked a Braintree (Mass.) Sunday-school teacher of one of his boys. And instead of giving the answer in the catechism, he replied: "The chief end of man is the end what's got the head on."

WIGGINS—Who are those ladies in that left-hand box? Muggins—Oh, that is a constellation of society stars. Wiggins—Any particular constellation? Muggins—Well, judging from their decollete costumes, I should say the Great Bear.

"BRETHREN," writes a Georgia editor, "the paper is a little late this week, but when we tell you the reason we are sure you will forgive us. We were out in the country, attending the funeral of our mother-in-law. She died young, but she died game."

PURCHASER—Rosenbaum, you told me this suit was fast colors. Look how it has run. Rosenbaum—Still up me. Vatter Abraham, not does the man want? I said does colors was fast, not day run. Do you dink dey oughter fly, or go by steam, or somedings like dot?

NEIGHBOR (breathlessly)—Where's your pa? Little girl—He's gone to the meeting of the Society for the Comforting of Jail-birds. Why? Neighbor—He's wanted, quick. I just saw two suspicious-looking cusses driving off like sixty with your pa's horse and buggy.

AT EVENING. The sun had kissed the western wave, And bade the world good-night, While in the sky the floating clouds Hung blushing at the slightest breeze. The playful ripples dancing came Foun out the mighty sea, And passed a moment on the sands And kissed them tenderly. The gentle evening breezes sighed Among the boulders bare, And kissed their loneliness away, And lingered fondly there. A youth beside a nation walked I tell no wondrous deed, When twilight's shadows kissed the shore, He followed Nature's lead, —Puck.

Things I Hate to See.

I hate to see a man always talking about what a happy place heaven is, and doing nothing to make his home resemble it.

I hate to see a man with a suspicious breath boast of his temperance principles.

I hate to see a man continually talking about how much he loves everybody, and never doing anything to help anybody.

I hate to see a prominent church member slipping into a butcher shop to buy something for breakfast on Sunday morning.

I hate to see a man keep two dogs and claim that he is too poor to do anything to help the church along.

I hate to see a bald-headed man selling hair restorative.

I hate to see people overly particular about their clothes, and underly particular about their morals.

I hate to see a man remember everything the clown said twenty years ago, and forget every word the preacher said last Sunday morning.

I hate to see people give all their sweet to the world, and keep all their sour for the fireside.

I hate to see a man chewing tobacco while he is whipping his boy for smoking.—The Ram's Horn.

Supposing a Case.

"It seems to be a perfectly clear case against you," said the reporter. "Why not make a clean breast of it and let me publish your confession?"

"Confession!" exclaimed the indignant prisoner. "I have nothing to confess! I am an innocent man, sir! But if—if—s'posin' I did have a confession to make, what's the best figger your paper would pay me for it?"

"MARRIAGE is indeed a lottery," sighed Tommoddy, after a tiff with his wife. "And we both drew prizes," returned the lady. "Ah!" said T., somewhat mollified. "Yes; you got a capital prize and I took the booty."

SINGULAR that a man with no money to trouble him should have money troubles.